

7/9/08 - Wednesday, July 9, 2008

EAU CLAIRE LANDMARKS COMMISSION

Meeting of July 9, 2008

Members Present: Jenny Ebert, John Mann, Katrinka Bourne, Bob Von Haden, Ken Ziehr, Sue Nelson, Ken Fulgione

Members absent: None

The Commission convened the meeting at 1500 State Street to walk through the house and discuss changes proposed in COA-2008-7. The Commission also walked through the properties located at 1406 and 1408 State Street. Cary Osborn, the applicant, Brian Bessinger, from Royal Construction and Bob Johnson, architect for the project discussed the proposed changes and answered questions from the Commission. Upon completion, the Commission reconvened the meeting at City Hall in the City Council Chambers.

Minutes. The minutes of the June 4, 2008 meeting were approved as written.

1. Consideration of Applications for Certificate of Appropriateness.

A. 1500 State Street - To Make Exterior Changes for a Conversion to a 5-Unit Apartment and Comment on Conditional Use Permit Application. Mr. Cary Osborn has submitted an application for a Certificate Appropriateness to make several exterior changes to the Buffington House, located at 1500 State Street. These proposed changes are part of a proposal to convert the building into a 5-unit apartment building.

This item was postponed from the June meeting to allow the applicant time to make changes to the proposal to address comments of the Commission.

As noted at the June meeting, the Buffington House is located within the Third Ward National Register District, which was designated in 1983. That same year, the Eau Claire Landmarks Commission designated the property as an individual landmark property. In 1985, the Commission designated the Third Ward Historic Landmark District and the Buffington property was included within the district as a pivotal property.

Revised plans presented to the Commission include the following changes to the property:

- Adding blacktop for parking and drives
- Remove an existing second-story exit door on the north elevation
- Remove an existing steel jump platform on the north elevation and construct new wood stairs extending west to a landing and then extending back to the east
- Install a new second-story exit door on the west elevation
- Remove a small square window on the west elevation below the proposed new second-story exit door
- Install a new first-floor door, close-in entry and install new window on the west elevation
- Install replacement windows in sunroom on the north and west elevations
- Install a new stairway to basement on the west elevation
- Install a new window on the first floor of the north elevation to create a new bedroom.

Pat Ivory noted that the proposed conversion of the structure to a 5-unit apartment requires approval of a conditional use permit from the Plan Commission. The provisions that the Plan Commission is required to consider as part of their review of the conditional use permit application were discussed. It was noted that two conditions state that the property must be listed as a local landmark property and that the appearance of the dwelling including but not limited to facades and rooflines, as viewed from the public streets, will be maintained in or restored to its original condition as determined by the Landmark Commission.

Pat Ivory noted in their review of the application, the Commission should consider the criteria and standards set forth in the Landmarks Ordinance - Chapter 2.65 (2.65.010 and 2.65.040 B 2 a, and b) and the Third Ward Historic Landmark District Plan.

It was also noted that the Buffington property is listed as a pivotal property within the historic district. The historic district plan (page 16) states that the level of significance of a property within a district is an important consideration when reviewing applications for Certificate of Appropriateness. This is also stated in Section 2.65.040 B b of the Landmarks Ordinance. This section states, "The significance assigned a property in a district as pivotal, contributing or non-contributing shall be given decisive weight by the Commission when the Commission applies the district standards and guidelines for properties which are historically or architecturally significant and which contribute to or complement the district."

Mr. Osborn, the applicant, was present at the meeting and indicated that he would answer any questions from the Commission.

Terry Stanley, 1814 State Street, spoke in opposition to the request. Ms. Stanley stated that it was the Commission's role to protect the character of the properties within the district. She noted that she supported adaptive re-use of properties, but felt that the proposed exterior changes were excessive and would detract from the character of the property and district.

The Commission discussed the proposed changes. Katrinka Bourne stated that she was concerned about the impact of the enlargement of the proposed parking lot and its impact on the appearance of the property from the west and on properties located to

the west. She stated that landscape screening of the parking lot should be considered.

Sue Nelson also expressed concern about the impact of the larger paved area on the site.

Ken Ziehr noted that at the previous meeting, he had indicated that the applicant should look at some alternatives that would reduce the number and scale of the exterior changes proposed for the building. This included the possibly eliminating the exterior stairway and incorporating it within the structure. He noted that this might result in some re-configuration of the apartments and loss of a couple bedrooms. Ken stated that this had not been included in the proposed changes and questioned why this had not been considered. He added that he supported adaptive re-use of buildings, but not when the exterior character of a building is compromised.

Ken added that he felt that the construction of the exterior stairway on the north and west sides of the building would significantly detract from the character of the building. He noted that the proposed location of the exterior stairway could also pose problems in the winter with snow and ice build-up, which could lead the owners to eventually propose the need to construct some type of roofing over the stairway. He noted that the proposed exterior stairway would be visible not only from State Street, but also from Park Avenue.

The Commission also discussed the apartment proposed for the third floor and exiting requirements for this unit. They questioned whether the building inspector or some other code official had determined whether any exterior exiting platform or window would be required for that apartment. The proposed plans show only one exit for that unit in the form of an interior stairway and the Commission expressed concern that the applicant could later be informed that some exterior exit platform or stairway would be required by code.

Several Commission members agreed with Ken's comments.

ACTION TAKEN: Ken Ziehr moved to deny the request for Certificate of Appropriateness based on the review criteria contained in Chapter 2.65 and the historic district plan, noting that the exterior stairway would have a negative impact on the character of the Buffington House, that the additional paving of the property and not including any landscape screening would diminish the character and quality of the site and that assurances regarding the code requirements for the third floor apartment were needed. Bob Von Haden seconded the motion. All votes were in favor. Motion carried.

B. 431 Lincoln Avenue - To Change a Window for an Upstairs Bathroom. Karla and Bernie Hoefgen, 431 Lincoln Avenue, were present at the meeting requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace and move a bathroom window on the east side of their house. The house is listed as a contributing property within the Third Ward Historic Landmark District.

Mrs. Hoefgen noted that the existing window is approximately 18" x 27" in size and the new window would be 12" x 32" in size. It would be a wood frame window and replace a vinyl window. It would be shifted slightly higher on the wall to get the window out of the shower area in the bathroom.

ACTION TAKEN: John Mann moved to approve the application. Ken Fulgione seconded the motion. All votes were in favor. Motion carried.

2. Update on Landmark Activities and Properties.

A. Update on CLG Grant Project. Pat Ivory informed the Commission that Eric Wheeler had completed the two National Register nominations and that he would email copies to the Commission. The Commission then reviewed a draft of the brochure for the recreational trail historic markers. The Commission noted several changes and Jenny, Katrina and John offered to proof read the brochure and get comments back to Pat to forward on the Eric Wheeler.

Katrina Bourne left the meeting.

B. Landmark Designation Eligibility. The Commission discussed the landmark eligibility of buildings located in Rod and Gun Park and one in Lakeview Cemetery. Members of the Friends of Half Moon Lake are inquiring whether these buildings might be eligible for the local or National Register. Pat noted that the buildings were not included in the City's Intensive Survey.

Ken Ziehr and John Mann indicated that they would research the architecture and history of the buildings. The Commission also questioned whether all of Rod and Gun Park would be eligible.

ACTION TAKEN: Sue Nelson moved that the Commission should research Rod and Gun Park in terms of its history and architecture of buildings to determine whether a park should be considered for local landmark designation. John Mann seconded the motion. All votes were in favor. Motion carried.

C. Public Meeting Regarding Third Ward Landmark Historic District. The Commission discussed that they still needed to schedule a meeting with property owners within the Third Ward Historic Landmark District that had opted out of their designation back in 1992. The purpose of the meeting is to determine if any property owners would be interested in having their property added back into the district. The Commission directed Pat to wait until September to discuss scheduling the meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned a 6:50 p.m